

Thank you to the CGA Commerce Committee for raising some very important legislation. My name is Dr. Joe Emenheiser, and I am the UConn Extension Educator focused in the area of meat livestock. The two primary aims of my Extension position are 1) economic development of the meat livestock industry and 2) meat quality improvement. I wish to submit testimony on two bills with relevance to these aims, on behalf of UConn Extension and the UConn College of Agriculture Health and Natural Resources.

We support [Raised Bill 5125](#) AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO LIVESTOCK PROCESSING FACILITIES IN THE STATE.

We support a study of economic development benefits or issues relating to livestock processing facilities in the state. A viable livestock processing sector is important for many reasons including the following:

- Consumer demand for local meat products has increased significantly, in part due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This represents a significant economic growth opportunity for the meat livestock sector.
- Many local farm businesses, including traditional dairy production systems, can improve farm viability by expanding their products and marketing to include meats, especially via direct-to-consumer sales.
- Both formal and informal surveying of local livestock producers indicates that meat processing represents a significant operational challenge and also limits the expansion of their livestock businesses.
- Producers' access to timely livestock slaughter and processing is essential for ensuring a consistent supply of quality meat products. The lack of processing infrastructure also represents a humane issue.

An economic development study that explores the opportunities and challenges from all angles (including producers, processors, and consumers) is important to ensure viable systems.

This raised bill aligns with many of our College's initiatives in its strategic vision, including:

- Advance innovative, sustainable approaches to agriculture that align with local resources and markets
- Expand production and consumption of locally grown, safe, and nutritious foods
- Increase the contributions of agriculture to the Connecticut economy
- Provide innovative research and technical support to meet industry challenges
- Foster health equity, including food security, using a broad range of approaches, including community engagement
- Integrate research and outreach to ensure well-informed decision making
- Advance small acreage, intensive agriculture to increase food production near consumers

As a result, in addition to our support of this bill, the College offers our assistance with this bill and requests the inclusion of our Extension expertise in the associated study.

We also support [Raised Bill 5263](#) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROCESSING OF RABBITS FOR CONSUMPTION.

This raised bill also aligns with several of our College's initiatives in its strategic vision, including:

- Advance innovative, sustainable approaches to agriculture that align with local resources and markets
- Expand production and consumption of locally grown, safe, and nutritious foods
- Increase the contributions of agriculture to the Connecticut economy
- Advance small acreage, intensive agriculture to increase food production near consumers

While rabbits are not classified as livestock and thus do not fall within our meat livestock focus area or under USDA meat inspection, the need for safe and accessible rabbit processing has important implications for our agricultural economy and food system. We support the bill if the following concerns are addressed:

- Producers of meat livestock species with annual meat production less than the equivalent of 1000 rabbits are given equal consideration for state meat inspection.
- The Connecticut Department of Agriculture demonstrates sufficient capacity to oversee said inspection.

Thank you for your consideration of these bills. Please feel free to contact me at any time to discuss these issues. My email address is [joe.emenheiser@uconn.edu](mailto:joe.emenheiser@uconn.edu).